

Ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the grand opening of the newly-restored Sugar Bowl Pavilion in Wilmington's Brandywine Park

Wilmington— Officials from DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation and the Friends of Wilmington Parks invite the public to join in the grand opening of the newly restored Sugar Bowl Pavilion, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 2. The iconic architectural feature is located in Brandywine Park. The park is one of six that make up Wilmington State Parks, managed by Delaware State Parks.

"The restoration of the iconic Sugar Bowl Pavilion – years in the making – is a real testament to the dedication of so many people, most notably, the Friends of Wilmington Parks," said DNREC Deputy Secretary Kara Coats. "Our strong partnership with the Friends of Wilmington Parks, their commitment to the conservation and stewardship of our historic and cultural resources, has brought about a new – and better – Sugar Bowl Pavilion, restored beautifully for all Delawareans and visitors to enjoy."

The rebuilt pavilion is the culmination of more than 10 years of work. The project was originally discussed in 2004 as a partnership project between the Division of Parks & Recreation and Friends of Wilmington Parks. The planning and bid process continued through 2006 and the Friends began fundraising in 2007. The stock market crash in 2008 resulted in difficulty obtaining foundation grants for restoration projects, which slowed the Sugar Bowl renovation progress. The final phase of the project was completed in July of 2016, with the

installation of the 40-foot dome, which was custom-fabricated from a special fiberglass mold.

The historic structure provides visitors a unique vista from a rock cliff, a “gateway” to the city of Wilmington offering panoramic views of the Brandywine Creek and Brandywine Park. It stands near the WWI Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, the African American Medal of Honor Memorial and the Vietnam Memorial in Brandywine Park.

The pavilion will be used for community and family gatherings, ceremonies, concerts, theatrical performances, park programming and historic interpretation. “We are again realizing the dream of the park commissioners of a multifunctional observatory for generations to enjoy,” said Mike Porro, former president of the Friends of Wilmington Parks.

In addition to the new dome, the structure’s concrete deck has been replaced and the stone wall rebuilt. The pavilion has been restored with steel columns. A ramp is in place to ensure accessibility for everyone. And, new electric and lighting has been installed.

Altogether, Friends of Wilmington Parks raised close to \$650,000 for the restoration. Delaware State Parks provided \$84,560 from grants through the Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails Program (formerly the Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund), and \$100,000 came from other state park funds. State Representatives Gerald Brady and Harris McDowell each contributed almost \$50,000 through Community Transportation funds, and \$45,000 came from the City of Wilmington.

Originally completed in 1902, the pavilion became known as the Sugar Bowl due to its lid-like domed roof. It served as a meeting place and venue for musical programs for several decades. However, the pavilion fell into disrepair following

the devastating Hurricane Hazel in 1954, which led to a decades-long decline and deterioration process that left the Sugar Bowl behind.

Now, the freshly renovated pavilion will once again be a special place where visitors can gather to enjoy performances, concerts, park programming and other activities.

Vol. 46, No. 358